

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

Ohio State Engineer

Title: The Engineer's Bookshelf

Creators: Dumble, Wilson R.

Issue Date: 1945-05

Publisher: Ohio State University, College of Engineering

Citation: Ohio State Engineer, vol. 28, no. 6 (May, 1945), 15, 22, 32.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/36171>

The Engineer's Bookshelf . . .

By WILSON R. DUMBLE

I have been reading a collection of short stories recently published by the J. B. Lippincott Company of Philadelphia; it is called *Fighting Words* and it proves itself to be a series of short stories and cartoons by members of the Armed Forces of America. I shall not concern myself with the cartoons: at best they are not particularly funny, although the one best cartoon . . . best, to my way of thinking . . . is a cleverly done bit of work featuring a soldier's crap game in a company barracks. Probably I liked it because it is reminiscent of my army life.

But I am concerned with the short stories, because I think that the volume contains at least three of the better short stories that have grown out of this war. Some of the other stories ruin themselves in one or another way because, chiefly, the author is amateurish and suddenly changes his point of view, or because his dialogue reads as if it had come from a Laura Jean Libby or an E. P. Roe novel, or because of any number of shadings that throws the reader off balance before he reaches the end of the tale. You know that any number of items such as theme or plot or characterization or setting or, even emotional effect can ruin completely an otherwise fine story.

One of the best stories in *Fighting Words*, however, is the first one in the volume; it is called *Clicking Heels* and it is written by Lt. Robert A. Grantier of the United States Naval Reserves. Although *Clicking Heels* is a dingy little tale with a time-worn plot, I'm certain that it satisfies all the requirement of a good short story. In its single scene you see a blinded soldier waiting in vain for the girl he left behind him. He sits in a rather shabby little cafe waiting to hear the clicking heels of the nurse in uniform coming across the floor just as he has done many times before he had experienced active service at Guadalcanal. Of course, when she does come, the soldier does not know it. One side of her blue uniform skirt hangs loose, for there is no leg beneath it, and her one good leg is shod in a rubber-soled shoe and swings loose between her crutches. Then you read Lt. Grantier's last sentence: "Silently the girl swung over to the little table in the corner and sat there, looking eagerly at the door."

You understand, of course, that the plot has been handled before, many times. It merely is a running commentary upon life; it is the eternal human struggle between things as they are and that ideal life that exists perhaps unconsciously in the mind of every author. It is one of those small fragments of life about which Miss Ruth Suckow writes so much.

As I said, it is not so much the plot of *Clicking Heels* that Lt. Grantier has given us; rather it is the way he has related the tale that really counts. When he decided to write the story, he decided definitely whose story it was; he decided that it belonged to the soldier. Then, he chose his point of attack close enough to the climax to bring the tale within certain bounds. He has not made it too literary, because *Clicking Heels* is not full of echoes of other authors, nor does it fail in reality because it does seem to be placed in a world that actually exists. Lt. Grantier could, you understand, spoil the entire effect of the tale by bringing the two characters together; but that would have been using coincidence as a spring board to get himself out of the literary hold. Nor is the story too much of that true-life-type tale that appears in certain ten cent weeklies cluttering up the minds of college students and people who should know better.

Lt. Grantier has a style that I believe he should cultivate. Style is such an intangible thing that I do not like to talk about it; and like the soul, style does not improve by being thought too much about. You know as well as anyone that there is no recipe for style; style must come from an individual application of technique. Some one once said that style is the subtle personal impress which a writer places on his work. And surely, from *Clicking Heels*, I feel that Lt. Grantier has a fine start along this line.

The other two stories in this volume that I like are called *The Horses Move in the Dust* by Sgt. Jordan Barlow and *Two Soldiers Stopped for Water* by Sgt. Walter Miller. Like *Clicking Heels* both of these tales are as clearly defined and etched. No doubt the average short story reader will enjoy all the stories in *Fighting Words*; but I recommend especially the three I

(Please turn to page 22)

THE BOOKSHELF

(Continued from page 15)

have mentioned. Judges for the contest which brought about these stories, by the way, were Lt. Max Miller of the Navy, Major Frank Frazier of the Army, and Clifton Fadiman of . . . I suppose, Information Please.

I believe you'll like *Fighting Words*.

MY COUNTRY

It is no easy task to pull together all the dreams and hopes and plans, all the past and present realities, all the heartbreak and joy that make up America. There have been many men who have labored to express these things in writing, who have tried to set down in words and phrases their interpretation of what this country means. Only a few have succeeded, because only a very few have been able to do this job without leaving something out. These few, the Carl Sandburgs, the Stephen Vincent Benets, and the Sherwood Andersons, are the minstrels of America, the men who sing the song of America's heart.

Russell Davenport's new book, *My Country*, will doubtless get him nominated to this class, for in this "Poem of America" the author has left nothing out. It is a beautiful poem, one that tugs at the heartstrings of its readers and makes them proud to be a part of the nation whose praises it sings.

"America is generous to the free," he writes—

"To those who ask no favor of the great except equality. . . .

All tongues and nations are American,

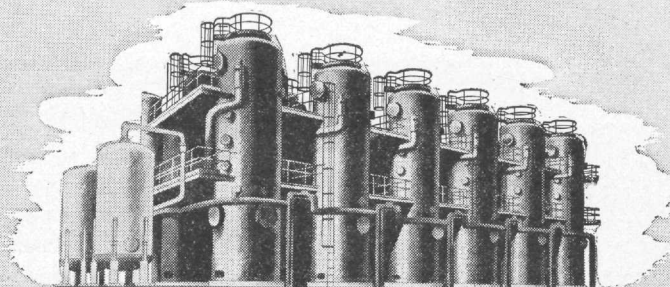
All nations are embodied in her job,

To breed the noble concept of a man

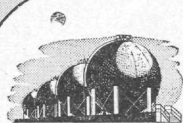
Whose freedom is, that others should be free—"

By the way, Mr. Davenport does not forget those factors which make America imperfect; he does not overlook the racial and religious prejudices of the few, the hatred and intolerance of the ignorant that mar the freedom and the happiness of the many. Nor does he overlook the errors that we made, the mask of neutrality with which we clothed ourselves when other peoples and other nations faced the early onslaughts of a common enemy. But America is young and we are learning, says the author. Our sights are set high, and we will reach them all. Equality of race and of religion, equal freedom for the rich and poor, these things we do not fully have today, he agrees; but they are the inevitable promise of our future.

(Please turn to page 32)



UNION CARBIDE *AGAIN* REPORTS *on the production of* BUTADIENE for the Government's Synthetic Rubber Program



ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT factors in the Government's rubber program is the production of GR-S type synthetic rubber.

The basic chemical in this rubber is Butadiene, which can be made from alcohol or hydrocarbon materials.

The Government's original plan provided that about one third of the required Butadiene would be made by CARBIDE AND CARBON CHEMICALS CORPORATION's alcohol process.

In 1943, their first year of operation, however, the plants using this process produced over 75 per cent of all Butadiene made for GR-S type synthetic rubber.

In 1944, the second year, these plants produced about 64 per cent of all Butadiene necessary for military and essential civilian rubber. This was true despite the fact that good progress had been made in the production of Butadiene by other processes.

THE RECORD

The first tank-car load of Butadiene was shipped from the Government's Carbide-built, Carbide-operated plant at Institute, West Virginia a little over two years ago.

This was just five months after the famous Baruch Committee Report pointed out this nation's desperate need for rubber—and approved Carbide's butadiene alcohol process, originally selected by Rubber Reserve Company, as one of the solutions.

In its first year the Institute plant, with a rated capacity of 80,000 tons per year, produced enough Butadiene for more than 90,000 long tons of synthetic rubber.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1942

"Of all the critical and strategic materials, rubber is the one which presents the greatest threat to the safety of our nation, and to the Allied Cause.... We find the situation to be so dangerous that unless corrective measures are taken immediately the country will face both a military and a civilian collapse."

—Report of the Rubber Survey Committee
(Baruch Committee).

The material herein has been reviewed and passed by the Rubber Reserve Company, the Defense Plant Corporation, and the War Department.

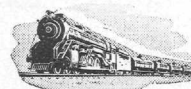
Two more great plants using Carbide's alcohol process—and built from the blueprints of the Institute plant—are in full production. One of these, with an annual rated capacity of 80,000 tons of Butadiene is located at Kobuta, Pennsylvania and is operated for the Government by another important chemical company.

The second, with a rated capacity of 60,000 tons a year, is operated for the Government by Carbide at Louisville, Kentucky—making the total rated capacity of the two huge plants now operated by Carbide 140,000 tons a year.

In 1944, the production of Butadiene from the three plants using the alcohol process totaled 361,000 tons—representing operation at over 164 per cent of rated capacity. An even higher rate is expected in 1945.

* * * * *

Before Pearl Harbor, the United States was a "have not" nation with respect to rubber. Now, thanks to American research, engineering and production skill, our country can take its place as a dominant factor among the great rubber producing nations of the world.



Business men, technicians, teachers, and others are invited to send for the book P5 "Butadiene and Styrene for Buna S Synthetic Rubber from Grain Alcohol," which explains what these plants do, and what their place is in the Government's rubber program.

AUGUST 31, 1944

"Undoubtedly the outstanding achievement of your company has been the development of your process for the production of Butadiene from alcohol. With a rather meager background of experimental work, your engineers were able to design and construct commercial units for the production of Butadiene. In an exceedingly short time, the operation of this equipment at capacities up to 200 per cent of rating has been largely responsible for our present safe situation with respect to rubber supplies..."

—Letter from Rubber Director Eradley Dewey to
CARBIDE AND CARBON CHEMICALS CORPORATION

BUY UNITED STATES WAR BONDS AND STAMPS

UNION CARBIDE AND CARBON CORPORATION

30 East 42nd Street  New York 17, N. Y.

Principal Units in the United States and their Products

ALLOYS AND METALS—Electro Metallurgical Company, Haynes Stellite Company, Kemet Laboratories Company, Inc., United States Vanadium Corporation
CHEMICALS—Carbide and Carbon Chemicals Corporation PLASTICS—Bakelite Corporation ELECTRODES, CARBONS & BATTERIES—National Carbon Company, Inc.
INDUSTRIAL GASES AND CARBIDE—The Linde Air Products Company, The Oxweld Railroad Service Company, The Prest-O-Lite Company, Inc.

THE BOOKSHELF

(Continued from page 22)

“And still however far her sons may go,
To venture or to die beyond her sight,
These little windows shine incognito
Across incredulous humanity;
That all the people of the earth may know
The embattled destination of the free—
Not peace, not rest, not pleasure—but
to dare
To face the axiom of democracy;
Freedom is not limit, but to share;
And freedom here is freedom every-
where.”

That is the testament which Russell Davenport has written to democracy and to America!

Mr. Davenport's is the kind of poem that should be read aloud at intervals.